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ABSTRACT

The paper presents results from Georgia's performance of speech-language pathologists (SLPs) on two measures of performance-based certification. The written Teacher Certification Test in Speech Language Pathology covers five broad areas: (1) fundamentals of speech and language, (2) speech and language disorders, (3) related handicapping conditions, (4) hearing impairment, and (5) program management/professional knowledge. Comparison of scores with masters and bachelor level SLPs is presented. The Speech Language Pathology Assessment Instrument (SPAI), used for on the job training, was completed for 81 SLPs from 1983-85. Masters and bachelor level comparisons are made along with comparisons of SLPs trained in Georgia with those trained in other states. The seven competency areas of the SPAI are listed. (CL)

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Accountability in the School Setting: Performance Evaluation of School Speech-Language Pathologists

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Beginning speech-language pathologists (SLPs) in Georgia schools have been required since 1983 to complete satisfactorily a performance-based certification process. The certification process includes the written Teacher Certification Test in Speech-Language Pathology (TCT-SLP) as well as an on-the-job assessment employing the Speech-Language Pathology Assessment Instrument (SPAI).

Teacher Certification Test

The written test, the Teacher Certification Test for Speech-Language Pathologists (TCT-SLP) is multiple choice in format and covers the broad areas of (1) fundamentals of speech and language, (2) speech and language disorders, (3) related handicapping conditions, (4) hearing impairment, and (5) program management/professional knowledge. All school SLPs are required to attain a passing score during the first year of employment. Pre-service SLPs in Georgia may take the TCT-SLP during the last quarter of their undergraduate or graduate programs. The TCT-SLP was developed by National Evaluation Systems in consultation with Georgia SLPs and is administered by the Georgia Department of Education four times a year at various sites around the state.

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TCT-SLP Certification Results

During the first two years of administration (1982-84), 139 SLPs (BA and MA) were tested with the TCT-SLP. Seventy-five (54%) of the SLPs made a passing score on their first attempt. Those failing were offered a second attempt with the following results: 11 SLPs passed (7.9% of the original group of 139), 26 (18.7%) failed for the second time, and 27 (19.4%) elected not to retake the test. The third test offering resulted in 5 additional SLPs passing (3.6%), 5 failing a third time (3.6%), and 16 electing not to take the test again. The fourth attempt found one SLP (.7%) taking and failing the test and the remaining four SLPs choosing not to attempt the test again (2.9%). The four administrations of the test resulted in the following cumulative data: 91 SLPs (65.5% of the original 139 SLPs) passed the TCT-SLP, 1 SLP (.7%) failed all four attempts, and 47 SLPs (33.8%) elected to drop out of the testing program.

A second comparison traces the pail-fail, take-retake-no retake path of 58 masters level SLPs who were tested during the period February, 1984 to February, 1985. Thirty-nine (67%) passed and 19 (33%) failed on the first test attempt. On the second attempt, nine SLPs passed (15.5% of the original group of 58), 5 (8.6%) failed for the second time and 5 (8.6%) elected not to retake the test. On the third attempt, two SLPs (3.4%) passed, one SLP (1.77%) failed for the

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third time, and two (3.4%) elected not to retake the test. The cumulative results indicate that with three attempts possible, 86.2% of the SLPs had passed the TCT-SLP, 1.7% failed the third attempt, and 12% had dropped out of the testing program.

A comparison of these two groups of data indicates that MA SLPs demonstrated a higher pass rate than the combined BA/MA group both on the initial attempt (67% vs 54%) and on the final attempt (86.2%) vs 65.5%). Another difference was demonstrated in the percentage of SLPs electing to drop out of the testing program rather than continuing to retake the test. Only 12% of the MA SLPs elected to drop out, whereas 33.8% of the combined BA/MA group chose not to continue.

Speech-Language Pathology Assessment Instrument

The Speech-Language Pathology Assessment Instrument (SPAI), used for on-the-job evaluation, was developed by SLPs under the aegis of the Georgia Department of Education. The SPAI is comprised of 23 indicator items which are grouped into seven competency areas. Administration, diagnostics, and therapy planning are sampled through a portfolio prepared by the beginning SLP and through an interview with the SLP (Competencies I-IV); therapy is evaluated through direct observation (Competencies V-VII). Personnel from 17 Regional Assessment Centers (RACs) coordinate all teacher certification assessments, including those for SLPs.

Prior to the beginning of the assessment, RAC personnel provide all SLPs an orientation to the SPAI and the assessment process. There are two assessment periods scheduled per school year with at least 50 teaching days intervening between assessments. Within the three-year limit established by the Georgia Department of Education, an SLP has a maximum of six opportunities to demonstrate proficiency at least once on each of the seven competency areas.

Assessments are conducted by teams of four data collectors: an administrator from the SLP's school system, an RAC representative, and two masters level SLPs. Ratings assigned by the data collectors within each of the competency areas are compared to minimum performance levels previously established through statewide surveys of masters level school SLPs.

Satisfactory performance on each competency can be demonstrated in either of two ways:

1. 85 percent of the indicator ratings at or above the minimum levels on one assessment, or

2. 75 percent of the indicator ratings at or above the minimum levels over a combination of two consecutive assessments.

When either of these standards is met, the competency is credited as completed.

Each SLP assessed receives a computer printout and detailed interpretation of the assessment results in a personal conference. Staff development opportunities and available resources are also identified at this time. When the performance profile for each assessment period is delivered and interpreted, the applicants are informed of their status toward completion of the requirements. Competencies which have been satisfactorily demonstrated are credited. Remaining competencies will be addressed in the subsequent assessment(s). When all seven competencies have been satisfactorily demonstrated, the Teacher Certification Office, Georgia Department of Education, will issue the Performance-Based SLP certificate.

SPAI Certification Results

Complete results from 1983-84 and partial results from 1984-85 SPAI initial assessments were available for the present analysis. Of the 81 SLPs for whom scores were reported, 25 (31%) demonstrated proficiency on all seven competencies. Two SLPs mastered only one competency and none failed to reach proficiency on any of the competencies.

An analysis of training level and training location was carried out on 66 of the 81 subjects evaluated with the SPAI during the first one and one-half years of performance-based certification. Thirty-one percent of masters level SLPs (N=26) mastered all seven competencies on the first attempt, compared to 12% of the SLPs holding bachelors degrees (N=40). One half of the masters level subjects mastered at least six of the seven competencies whereas at least five of the seven competencies were initially mastered by one half of subjects with bachelors degrees. Masters level SLPs most frequently mastered five (30%), six (31%), or seven (31%) competencies, whereas the most frequent numbers of competencies mastered by the SLPs with bachelors degrees were four (20%), five (25%), or six (22%). The results indicate that SLPs with masters degrees were more successful than were those with bachelors degrees in their first attempt at demonstrating mastery of the SPAI competency areas.

The comparison of SLPs trained in Georgia with those trained in other states revealed that all seven competencies were passed by 16% of the in-state SLPs (N=31) and by 23% of those trained out-of-state (N=35). One half of the instate SLPs mastered six or seven competencies, whereas one-half of out-of-state SLPs mastered at least five competencies. The SLPs trained in Georgia most frequently mastered six competencies (53%) while those trained out-of-state most frequently mastered five (31%) or seven (23%) competencies. Thus, although more out-of-state SLPs successfully completed the entire SPAI on the first try, the overall performance of in-state SLPs was somewhat better.

SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENT
GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Competencies and Indicators

I. The SLP demonstrates program management skills.

- A. Informs faculty of program services.
- B. Develops work schedule(s) which will fit the needs of the student, school, and faculty.
- C. Maintains a physical environment conducive to learning.

II. The SLP uses screening and referral techniques.

- A. Implements screening and/or referral procedures to identify students needing speech-language evaluation.
- B. Follows through on referrals made to the program.
- C. Makes referrals for further evaluations.

III. The SLP obtains and uses diagnostic information.

- A. Obtains diagnostic information.
- B. Obtains and uses information from co-workers and parents to assist with specific student problems.
- C. Revises therapy as needed using evaluation results and observation data.

IV. The SLP plans for students and maintains records.

- A. Develops long range goals for students.
- B. Develops short term objectives for students.
- C. Uses standard English when writing (legibility, spelling, punctuation, morphology, syntax, organization).
- D. Records program and student information.

V. The SLP uses therapy approaches and materials.

- A. Uses therapy approaches which meet individual student needs.
- B. Implements therapy activities in a logical sequence.
- C. Uses materials compatible with student age and student interest.

VI. The SLP stimulates and interacts with students to enhance student performance.

- A. Provides stimuli or cues during therapy.
- B. Reinforces student responses.
- C. Obtains responses which allow for evaluation of student performance in therapy.

VII. The SLP uses therapy management skills.

- A. Provides instructions and explanations which are understood by the student.
- B. Provides motivating activities.
- C. Records responses during diagnostic and therapy activities.
- D. Reinforces and encourages the efforts of students to maintain involvement.